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ABSTRACT

Twenty-seven activities are suggested for middle or junior high school students to perform while visiting any local cemetery. The activities make use of skills in mathematics, language arts, social studies, science, and environmental studies. All activities require a pencil and a copy of this workbook. Other materials for specific activities include camera, tape measure, and newsprint and crayons for making rubbings. Gravestone rubbings are not only enjoyable to make, but they also allow information to be transported to the classroom in its original state. Many of the activities involve students in recording birth and death dates, comparing ages of death of men and women during various periods, analyzing epitaphs, and identifying the social causes of death such as war. An open-ended sentence completion activity encourages students to describe their feelings about death and life goals after having spent some time in the cemetery. A number of activities with a science orientation involve the students in identifying and studying the plant and animal life within the cemetery. Parts of flowers are to be identified, scientific names of leaves are to be researched, and insect life is recorded. Sketches or photos of plants, rocks, and animals are encouraged. Classes will have to make several trips to the cemetery in order to accomplish most of the activities. (AV)

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THE CEMETERY
AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

by

Edward L. Stranix, Ph. D.

A Student Workbook

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A National Model for Strengthening Environmental Studies in Local Schools

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Project KARE
Colony Office Building, Route 73 & Butler Pike, Blue Bell, Pa.
Matthew Hickey, Director

This organization has funded environmental studies programs at Rhodes Middle School for the past three years. This funding enabled my students and myself to become actively involved in urban environmental problems and urban environmental study sites.

Jacob Hoffman, Principal of Rhodes Middle School

Mr. Hoffman is a principal who actively supports and encourages open education and student involvment in the community.

Mike Cooney, Michael Fleishman, Gail Friedman,
John Skari, Marlene Smith, and John Thomson

All of these people were Temple University student teachers working at Rhodes Middle School during the school year 1973-74. Each student teacher worked with a group of 10 students. They field tested the activities in this workbook and reported high student interest and involvement.

Ernestine Jacobs, Charles Robinson, Renee Jones and
Janice Roundtree

All photographs were taken and developed by the above sixth grade students at Rhodes Middle School.

To the teacher:

The following pages contain a variety of written activities that students can do while visiting a local cemetery. For the majority of these activities, the student will only need a pencil and this workbook.

For city and suburban students, the local cemetery offers a safe, open and available area for discovery and study. A variety of activities directly involved with Mathematics, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Environmental Studies are available by using this workbook and visiting any local cemetery. By making rubbings of gravestones (Activity 27) it is possible to bring most of the fascinating information that you find in the cemetery back to the classroom.

It is recommended that trips to a local cemetery be arranged like all other trips. First, get permission from the cemetery manager, then acquire the same permission from parents and school administrators.

My students visited two cemeteries in the Philadelphia area on a regular basis (twice a week) during the school year 1973-74. I found the cemetery managers to be most receptive and on several occasions, they escorted the students on guided tours.

I am sure that you and your students will find a trip to the local cemetery, with this workbook, to be a most beneficial learning experience.

Good luck,

E. L. S.

ACTIVITY I

Directions: Write 20 names from the headstones. Also put down their birth and death dates. Can you determine their ages at death?

	NAME	BIRTH	DEATH	AGE
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				

ACTIVITY 2

Directions: Record the ages of death for 15 men and 15 women. Can you determine the average age of death for both groups?

MEN	WOMEN
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.
11.	11.
12.	12.
13.	13.
14.	14.
15.	15.
+	+
_____	_____
Average age of death:	Average age of death:
Men_____	Women_____

ACTIVITY 3

DIRECTIONS: Record the ages of death for 10 men and 10 women who died during each of the following time periods:

1800 - 1849		1850 - 1899	
Men	Women	Men	Women
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.	5.
6.	6.	6.	6.
7.	7.	7.	7.
8.	8.	8.	8.
9.	9.	9.	9.
10.	10.	10.	10.
Average age of death:		Average age of death:	
Women= _____		Women= _____	
Men = _____		Men = _____	

Continue the project with 1900 - 1949, 1950 - present.

Questions:

1. What are the differences in the average ages of death for the different time periods?

2. Compare the men and the women. Which group lives longer?

3. Why do you think one group lived longer than the other?

ACTIVITY 4

Directions: Search through the cemetery and see if you can find 10 children who died before the age of 13 years. Record their names, ages and year of deaths.

NAME	AGE	YEAR OF DEATH
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Record the number of deaths during each of the following time periods:

1800 - 1849	1850 - 1899
1900 - 1949	1950 - present

During which period of time did the most children die? _____

Can you explain why?

ACTIVITY 5

Directions: Look on the headstones for epitaphs. Write down as many as you can find.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

Why do you think people write epitaphs?

ACTIVITY 6

From your list of epitaphs record the following:

1. Longest Epitaph -

2. Shortest Epitaph -

3. Funniest Epitaph -

4. Best Epitaph -

5. Worst Epitaph -

6. Write a funny epitaph - _____

_____

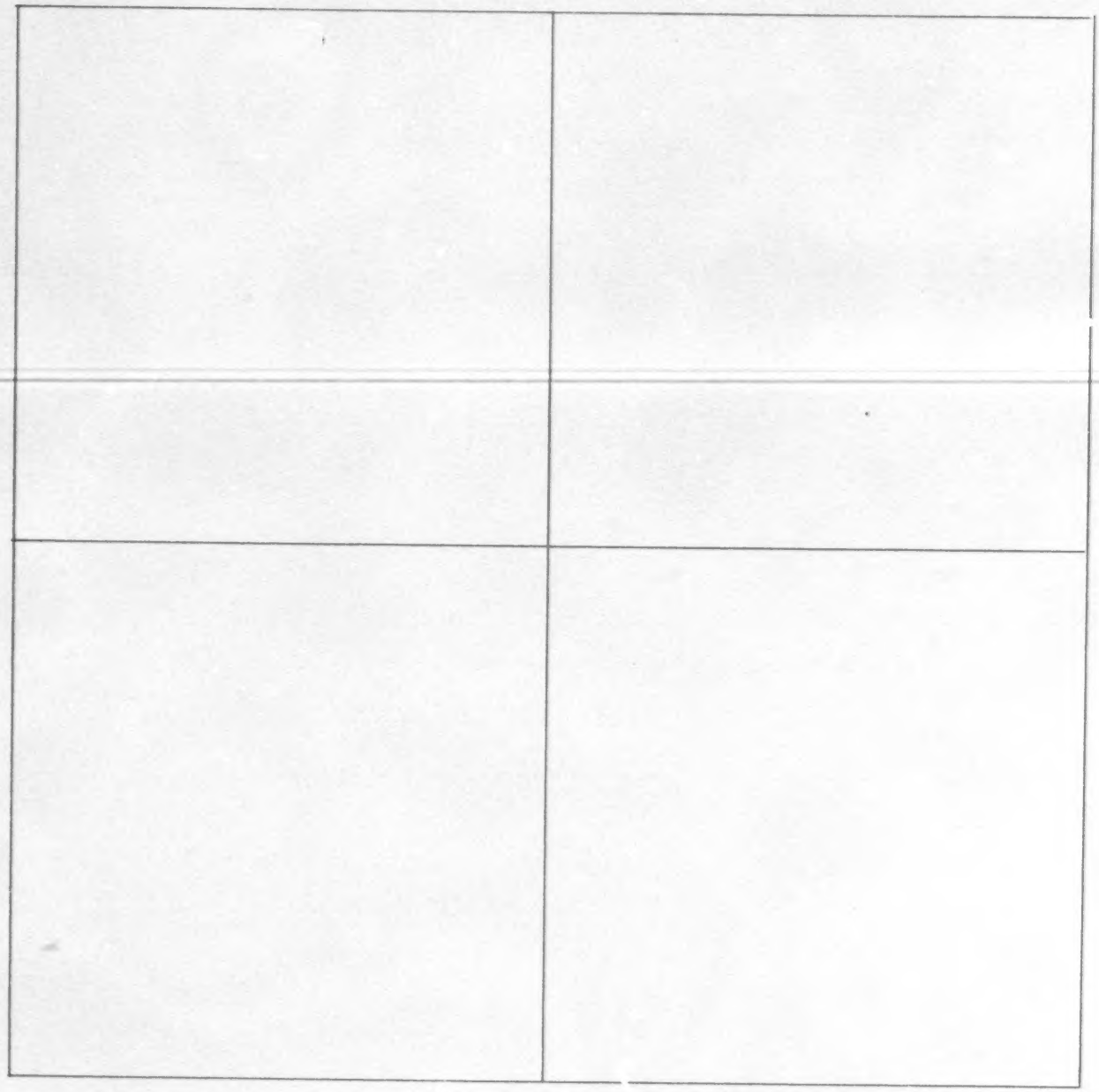
_____

_____

_____

ACTIVITY 7

Directions: What types of illustrations and decorations are found on the headstones? Draw or sketch a few of them in the boxes provided.



ACTIVITY 8

Directions: Describe the color, the surface, the length and the width of 10 headstones.

Example: brown, smooth, 40" long and 23" wide.

	COLOR	SURFACE	LENGTH	WIDTH
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Describe the most popular (most often seen) headstone. Use your own words.

ACTIVITY 9

Directions: Using a tape measure or a ruler, find the perimeter of 10 headstones.

	NAME	LENGTH	WIDTH	PERIMETER
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

"We recorded the size and weight of all the animals we found in the cemetery. We found lots of toads. The average size was three inches. We also measured the gravestones and found their perimeter and area. I felt funny in the beginning, but after awhile I really had a great time."

Henry Nedwood 12
Rhodes Middle School

ACTIVITY 10

Directions: Record the full name of 15 people and try by yourself, or with the aid of your teacher to find out what nationality or religion they were:

Example: Cohen = Jewish Kelly = Irish

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

ACTIVITY 11

Did you see any flowers or wreaths on the graves? _____

If yes, record the date of the person's death and today's date.

1. Person's death date _____

   Today's date _____

2. Person's death date _____

   Today's date _____

3. Person's death date _____

   Today's date _____

4. Person's death date _____

   Today's date _____

_____

_____

1. What do these dates tell you?
2. Why did some graves have wreaths and flowers and others have none?
3. Why do you think people put wreaths and flowers on the graves?

ACTIVITY 12

Directions: Look around the cemetery to find if any families are buried with each other. By that I mean, are mother, father, the children and grandparents buried together. Record the names, birth and death dates and age of 3 families.

NAME	BIRTH	DEATH	AGE
FAMILY 1			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
FAMILY 2			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
FAMILY 3			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

ACTIVITY 13

Directions: Finish the sentences in your own words

1. I would/ would not like to live forever because _____

_____

2. I would/would not like to say who lives or dies because _____

_____

3. My idea of heaven is _____

_____

4. My idea of hell is _____

_____

5. I do not believe in either, because death is _____

_____

6. When I think about death I feel _____

_____

7. Cemeteries make me feel _____

_____

8. The most unusual think I found in the cemetery was _____

_____

9. There should/should not be cemeteries because _____

_____

10. Before I die, I'd like to _____

_____

11. If I died at the age of 100, I'd like my epitaph to read _____

_____

ACTIVITY 14

Directions: Collect specimens of different leaves that you might find in the cemetery. Draw the shapes of the leaves in the blocks below and also record the color and size. Later, when you are in your classroom, color in the shapes using the colors you have recorded. Bring all specimens back with you to your classroom.

COLOR: _____ SIZE: _____	COLOR: _____ SIZE: _____
COLOR: _____ SIZE: _____	COLOR: _____ SIZE: _____

1. Name the parts of the leaf.

2. Write a definition for each part and tell what it does.

   a.

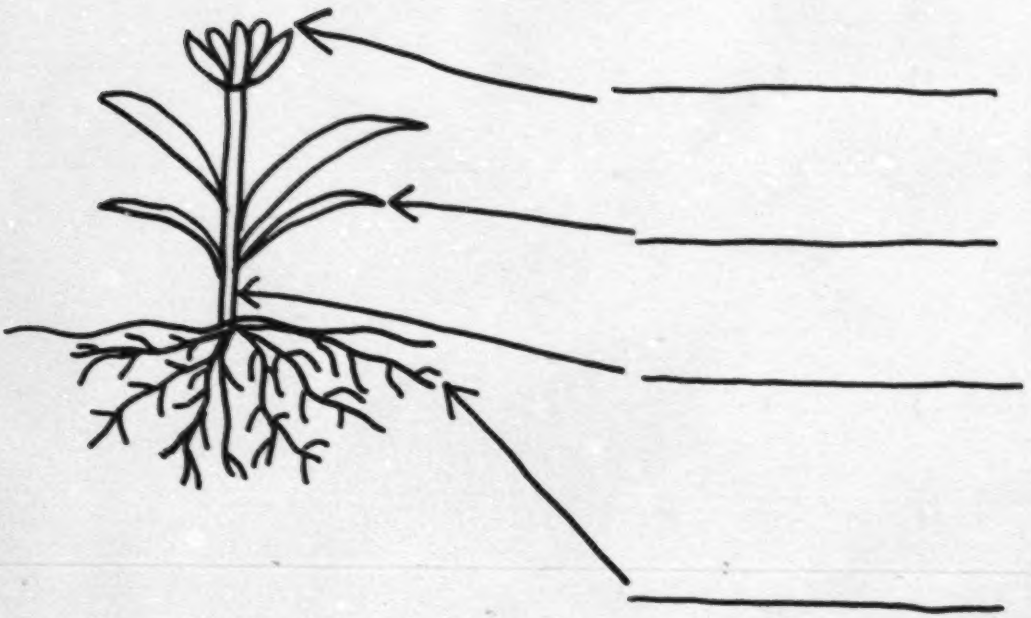
   b.

   c.

ACTIVITY 16

Directions: Collect specimens of different plants that you might find in the cemetery. Draw the shapes of the plants in the blocks below and also record the color and size. Later, when you are in your classroom, identify the plants.

COLOR: _____ SIZE: _____	COLOR: _____ SIZE _____
COLOR: _____ SIZE: _____	COLOR: _____ SIZE: _____



1. Name the 4 parts of any plant.

_____ _____ _____ _____

2. Write a definition for each part of a plant and tell what it does.

a.

b.

c.

d.

ACTIVITY 18

Directions: Look around the cemetery and observe the different types of grass and weeds. Describe and draw the grass and weed samples you find.

What does grass look like? What does it feel like? Smell like?

_____

_____

What do weeds look like? What do they feel like? Smell like?

_____

_____

Give definitions of the following:

a. Grass _____

b. Weeds _____

"I thought there were just people, streets, houses, and stores in my neighborhood. But, in the cemetery, I found frogs, grasshoppers, plants, trees, dead birds, grass, wild flowers, and garter snakes. I studied all these living things just one block from my house - in that old cemetery."

Cortez Enis 11
Rhodes Middle School

ACTIVITY 19

Directions: Describe and draw a wildflower. Record the color and size.

WILDFLOWER	COLOR	SIZE

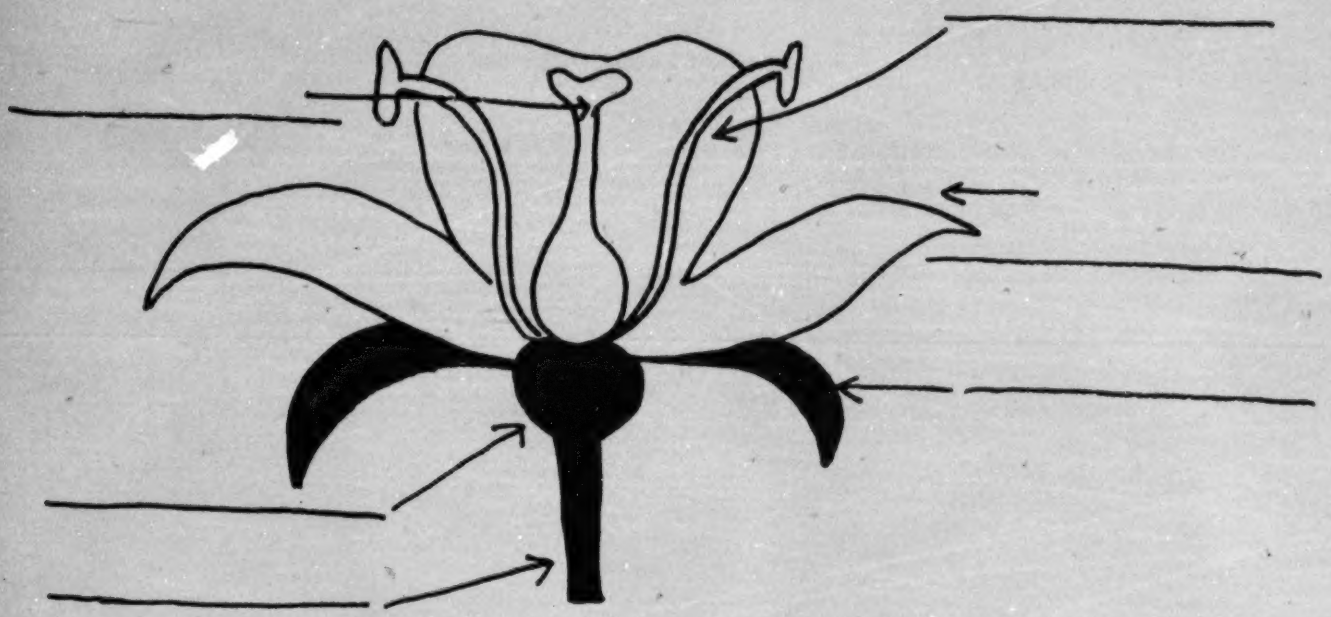
1. Is there grass growing around the flower? _____

2. Why/why not? _____

3. Are there any trees around the flower? _____

4. Why/why not? _____

ACTIVITY 20



1. Name the parts of a flower. _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

2. Write a definition and describe the function of each part of the flower.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

ACTIVITY 21

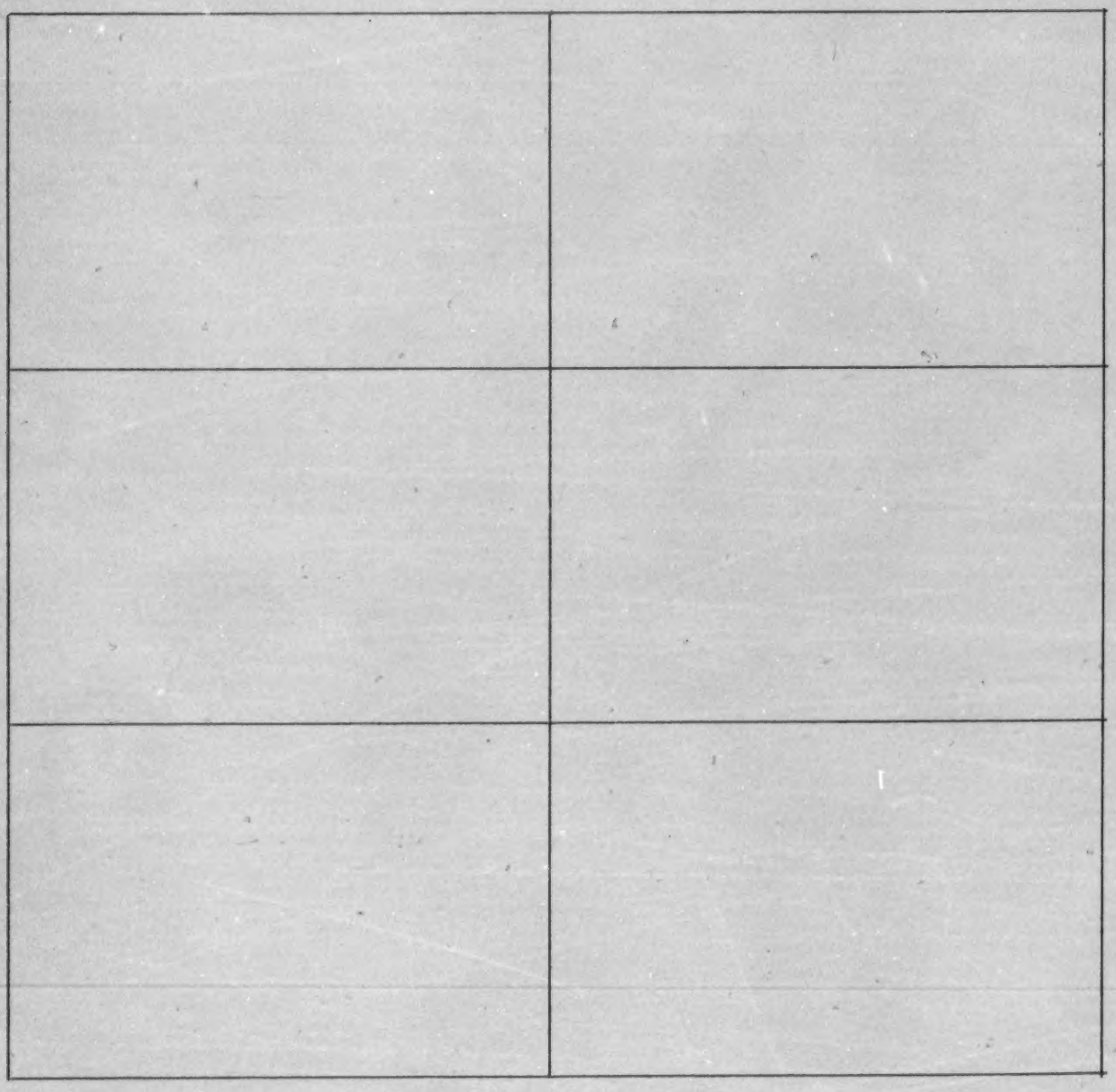
Directions: Search through the cemetery to find insects of any type. Record the name, the color, and size. Also, record if there were many of this type of insect around, or just one.

	NAME	COLOR	SIZE	NUMBER
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

ACTIVITY 22

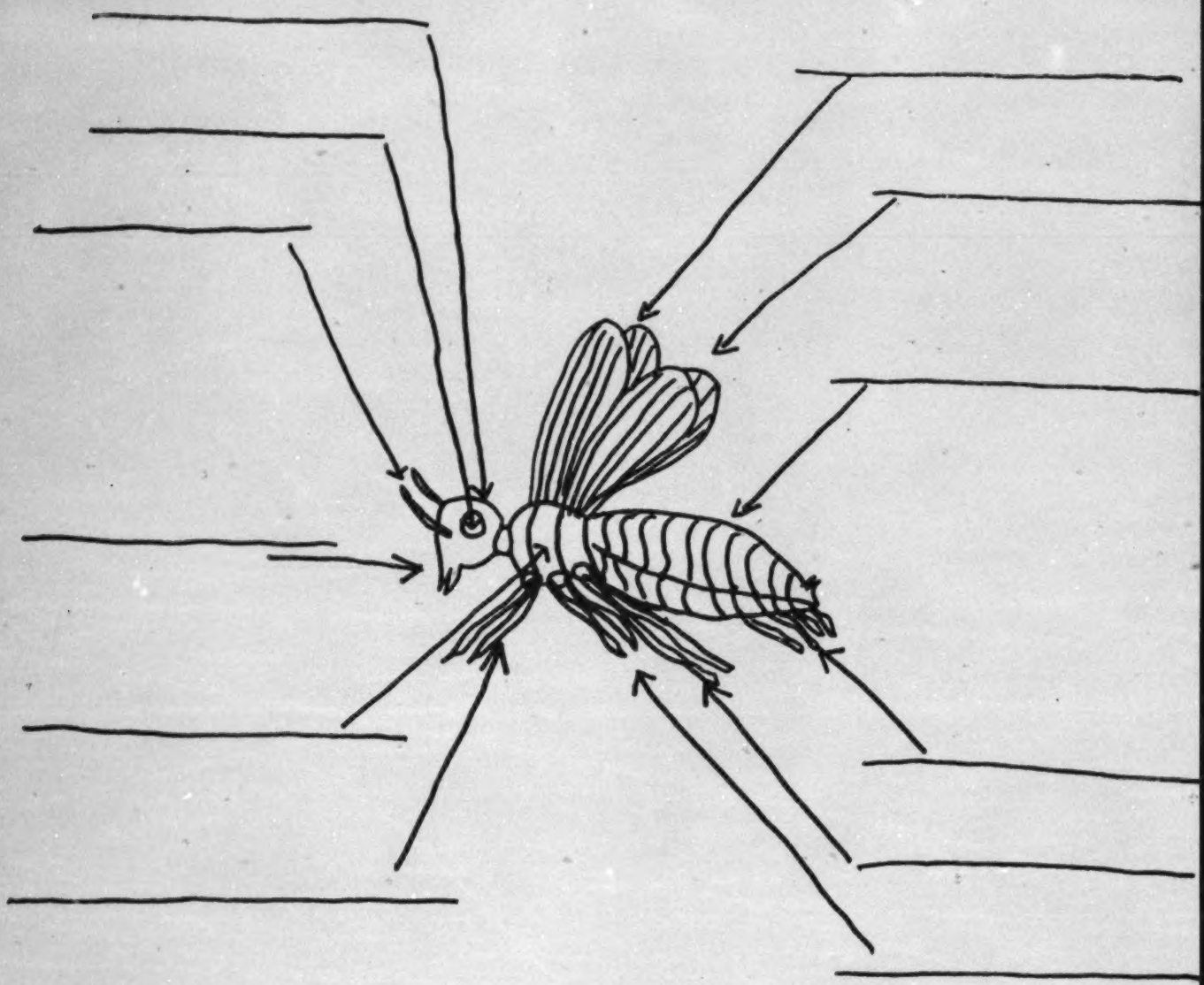
Directions: Draw a detailed picture of any insects that you find in the cemetery.

Bring some samples back to the classroom with you.



ACTIVITY 23

Directions: Name all the parts of this "typical" insect.



ACTIVITY 24

Directions: Observe a particular plant or tree over a period of time (September to June). Make a display with pictures illustrating its development. (Camera and color film best for this activity).

SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER
APRIL	JUNE

ACTIVITY 25

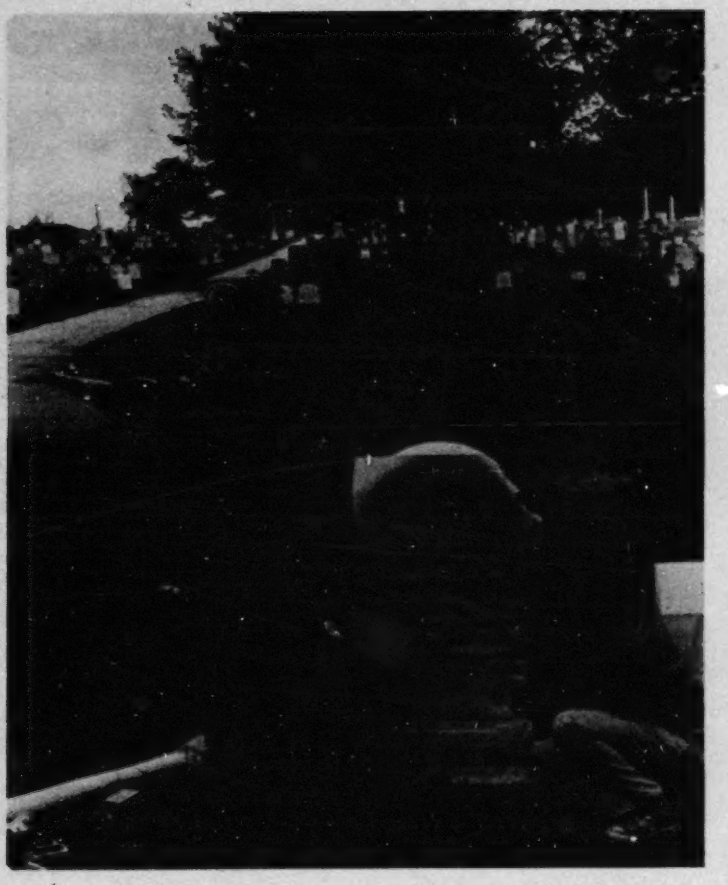
Directions: Sketch or photograph 4 different kinds of animal life found in the cemetery.

1.	2.
3.	4.

ACTIVITY 26

Directions: Collect, identify and display four different kinds of rocks found in the cemetery.

1. NAME:	2. NAME:
3. NAME:	4. NAME:



"We made hundreds of gravestone rubbings. We took them back to our classroom to study. We found people that died in the Civil War, The Spanish American War, World War I, and World War II. I enjoyed reading the grave-stone rubbings better than reading books."

Charles Graham 13
Rhodes Middle School

ACTIVITY 27

GRAVESTONE RUBBINGS

A rubbing is an impression of an object obtained by placing a thin sheet of paper over the object and rubbing it with a crayon or similar article. The basic procedure for obtaining gravestone rubbings is as follows:

a. Students select desired gravestone.

b. A sheet of newsprint is placed over the face of the gravestone and taped at the four corners. Care should be taken to insure that the newsprint is fastened securely. Paper which is loose will move, resulting in a double image.

c. Once the paper is secure, a large crayon should be held flat and rubbed over the newsprint. This will transfer the image of the gravestone onto the newsprint.

Suggested Activities:

1. Gravestones which indicate participation in wars.
2. Gravestones which have different symbols.
3. Gravestones which have the most unique epitaphs.
4. Gravestones which are the most decorative.
5. The oldest gravestones.

Rubbings will provide the teacher with a collection of valuable classroom materials which can be used to initiate inquiry into various areas of the Social Sciences.